

4NT Blackwood Turbo Charged



Easley Blackwood Sr.
1903 - 1992

Gary Brown's Bridge Archives: L 13
Degree of Difficulty: Beginner
Setting: 20 Minute Lecture

Along with the Stayman Convention, the **Blackwood** Convention is the most widely used Bridge convention in the world. No matter where in the world you are, if you can find a bridge game, your new partner will undoubtedly play **Blackwood**. When you find yourself in the situation where you think a slam is possible, you can bid 4NT asking partner how many aces she has.

Responses to 4NT Ace Asking:

5♣ = 0 or 4 Aces
5♦ = 1 Ace
5♥ = 2 Aces
5♠ = 3 Aces

Responses to 5NT King Asking

(Don't ask for kings unless all four aces are accounted for!)

6♣ = 0 or 4 Kings
6♦ = 1 Kings
6♥ = 2 Kings
6♠ = 3 Kings

When to Use the 4NT Blackwood Convention

It is important to know where you are going. Many less experienced players will 'pull-out 4NT' simply because they have a good hand. Generally, you should have an agreed suit (know where you are going). You should have the strength or the distribution which justifies taking slam interest.

When Not to Use It

1. If you have a void, you may not be able to determine if an ace partner has is a 'working' ace. i.e. You hold: ♠AJ987 ♥AK1094 ♦KQ5 ♣---, and your partner opens 1♠. You are obviously thinking slam! However, if you bid 4NT and partner responds 5♦ (showing one ace) you do not know if it is the ♣A or the ♦A. If it is the ♦A you could have a Grand slam in spades! See Flash Card #30 for more ideas on how to bid slams.
2. You should be prepared for all eventualities. For example; if you and partner agree on clubs as the trump suit and then you bid 4NT asking for aces and partner responds 5♦ showing one ace (you are now past 5♣!) you may be off 2 aces with no way to get back to 5♣. The gist is: 'think' about partner's possible responses to your 4NT ace asking bid especially if the agreed suit is clubs!!

Appropriate Use of Ace Asking Bids

Both Blackwood and Gerber are often mis-used. **DO NOT USE** Blackwood or Gerber if:

1. You do not know which strain you are going to play in. You should know where you are going. No trump or a suit. If a suit – which suit?
2. You have a void. If partner has one ace – you won't know if it's in your void suit.
3. You have two quick losers in any side suit.
4. Blackwood is not as suitable for minor suits - due to the lack of bidding space when partner responds. If planning to play in a club slam – you should have 2 aces in your hand to use Blackwood. If planning to play in a diamond slam, you would be well placed to have at least one ace in your own hand.
5. If a response by partner will put you too high. (see reason #4)
6. You are not sure that your side has enough strength (points or distribution) to make a slam. This is a given – but needs to be mentioned.
7. Asking for kings – guarantees possession of all 4 aces and shows Grand Slam interest. Be careful when asking for kings that partner's response does not get you past the intended suit.

Note:

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ A J 7 6	♠ K Q 9	1NT	pass	2♣	pass
♥ K 7 2	♥ A Q 9 8	2♠	pass	4NT ⁽¹⁾	pass
♦ A 9 8 6	♦ K 2	pass	pass		
♣ A 5	♣ Q 10 7 6				

(1) Not Blackwood

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ A 10 7 6	♠ K Q 9	1NT	pass	2♦ ⁽¹⁾	pass
♥ Q 10 5	♥ A K 9 8 7	2♥	pass	4NT ⁽²⁾	pass
♦ A 9 6 3	♦ K 2	6♥	all pass		
♣ A K	♣ Q 10 7				

(1) Transfer to spades (2) Not Blackwood

West	East	West	North	East	South
♠ A Q 4	♠ K 8 6	1NT	pass	2♠ ⁽¹⁾	pass
♥ A 9 7 5	♥ K 4	3♣	pass	4NT ⁽²⁾	pass
♦ A 9 6 3	♦ K 2	6NT	all pass		
♣ K 4	♣ A J 10 9 7 3				

(1) transfer to clubs (2) Not Blackwood

1. After Stayman and a response - a jump to 4NT is NOT Blackwood. It is quantitative.
2. After a Jacoby Transfer, a jump to 4NT is NOT Blackwood. It is quantitative.
3. After a minor suit Transfer (if you play them) – a jump to 4NT is NOT Blackwood. It is quantitative.

BLACKWOOD QUIZ

With the following hands you have the first few bids given to you. How should the bidding continue from there? **Take the bidding to conclusion.**

The Auction

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
♠A J 7 6 2	♠K 5	1♠	pass	2♥	pass
♥K 7 2	♥A Q 8 6 5 3	3♥	pass	?	
♦Q 9 6	♦2				
♣A 5	♣K Q 7 6				

The Auction

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
♠K 8	♠3	1♦	pass	3♦	pass
♥2	♥A 9 4	?			
♦K J 1 0 9 3	♦Q 8 7 5 2				
♣A Q J 9 3	♣K 8 7 2				

The Auction

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
♠A J 9 7	♠K Q 10 8 3	1♥	pass	1♠	pass
♥A Q 8 5 2	♥K 3	2♠	pass	?	
♦4 3	♦A 9 2				
♣6 2	♣A 8 7				

The Auction

W bids first. State the entire auction to conclusion.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
♠K J 8 4	♠A Q 10 2	1♣	pass	1♥	pass
♥Q 8 2	♥K J 7 6 3	1♠	pass	?	
♦3	♦A 8 6				
♣A K 8 5 2	♣4				

The Auction

W opens. State the entire auction to conclusion.

<u>West</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
♠Q J 8 7 6	♠A K 10 2	1♠	pass	?	
♥A 7 6 5	♥2				
♦3	♦A K 10 6 5 4 2				
♣A 5 4	♣2				

Addendum to 4NT Blackwood

When partner bids 4NT Blackwood, some inexperienced players might treat the void as if it were an ace and respond accordingly. However, this can get you into trouble so don't do it. As much as I prefer to play as few conventions as necessary, I do like a very clever addendum to Blackwood that is designed to handle those difficult situations where partner bids 4NT asking for aces and you have a void.

Consider the following hands. You and partner have agreed on hearts and then partner jumps to 4NT Blackwood, asking for aces:

♠ A 9 5	♠ A 8 7 6	♠ ---
♥ Q 9 7 3 2	♥ Q 10 7 6	♥ A Q 9 7
♦ ---	♦ A 9 5 4 3	♦ Q 10 8 6 3
♣ J 10 9 8 6	♣ ---	♣ 10 9 6 5

With the regular responses to Blackwood being:

5♣ = 0 or 4 aces
 5♦ = one ace
 5♥ = two aces
 5♠ = three aces

There is something uneasy about making the regular response with any of the above hands as you also have a side-suit void which you feel is valuable. Add the following responses and you feel more at ease knowing partner is also aware that you have a void in your hand. Consider the following responses to Blackwood:

Hand #1: Respond 6♦. A jump to the 6-level in a new suit is not a regular response to Blackwood. Hence a jump to the 6-level in a suit below the agreed suit (diamonds is below hearts) reveals one ace and a 'useful void' in the suit you jumped to!

Hand #2: Respond 5NT. A response of 5NT is not a regular response to Blackwood. Hence if you do respond with this irregular response, you are showing two aces and a useful* void.

Hand #3: Respond 6♥. A jump to the agreed suit in response to 4NT Blackwood shows one ace and a void above the agreed suit. If you were to jump to 6♠ to show a spade void you will have gone beyond 6♥ and you may now be too high in the auction.

*'Useful Void' *What the heck is that?* Sitting North you hold this hand:

♠ K 8 7 6 2
 ♥ A Q 7 3
 ♦ Q J 6 2
 ♣ ---

The Auction:

N	S
1♠	2♣
2♥	4NT

Just respond 5♦ showing one ace, as a response of 6♣ is not considered a 'useful void' as it is partner's primary suit.

ADDENDUM RESPONSE STRUCTURE TO BLACKWOOD

A jump to the 6-level promises **ONE ACE** and a void in the suit. (a suit below the agreed suit).
 A jump to the 6-level of the agreed suit – promises **ONE ACE** and a void above the agreed suit.
 A response of 5NT promises **TWO ACES** and a void.

ADDENDUM TO BLACKWOOD QUIZ

Note: When there is no agreed suit and partner bids 4NT Blackwood, assume that the last bid suit is the agreed suit.

A. The Auction:

	West	North	East	South
	1♥	pass	2♦	pass
	3♥	pass	4NT	pass
	?			

Based on this auction assume you are in the **W** chair and state what your response would be to partner's Blackwood, ace asking bid.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1.</p> <p>♠ ---</p> <p>♥K Q J 10 8 6 2</p> <p>♦Q 7 3</p> <p>♣A Q 3</p> | <p>2.</p> <p>♠A J 2</p> <p>♥A Q J 10 9 5 4</p> <p>♦K J 2</p> <p>♣---</p> | <p>3.</p> <p>♠K J 3</p> <p>♥A J 10 9 8 7 4</p> <p>♦---</p> <p>♣A Q 3</p> |
|---|--|--|

B. The Auction:

	West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♠	pass
	3♦	pass	4NT	pass
	?			

Based on this auction assume you are in the **W** chair and state what your response would be to partner's Blackwood, ace asking bid.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>1.</p> <p>♠ ---</p> <p>♥K Q 2</p> <p>♦A K Q 10 7 3</p> <p>♣Q 10 9 4</p> | <p>2.</p> <p>♠ ---</p> <p>♥A Q 4</p> <p>♦K Q J 10 8 5 2</p> <p>♣A 5 3</p> | <p>3.</p> <p>♠K J 3</p> <p>♥A 7 6</p> <p>♦A Q 10 9 8 7 4</p> <p>♣---</p> |
| <p>4.</p> <p>♠K 2</p> <p>♥K Q J</p> <p>♦K Q J 10 7 3</p> <p>♣Q 4</p> | <p>5.</p> <p>♠A 3</p> <p>♥A 10 4</p> <p>♦A J 10 9 8 5 2</p> <p>♣A</p> | <p>6.</p> <p>♠K J 3</p> <p>♥---</p> <p>♦A Q 10 8 4 3 2</p> <p>♣A 9 3</p> |

Clarity

We are still playing regular Blackwood. So - no need to panic. However, if you would like to upgrade your response structure – you and your partner may want to add this little gem. Do not treat a void as an ace or partner is being misled. With one ace - jump to your void if it is 'useful'. If your void is above the agreed suit – jump to six of the agreed suit. Respond 5NT if you have two aces and a 'useful void'.